

North Carolina First Quarter Legislative Report September 2018

“One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.”

--Vision of Teach For America

This year marks 28 years of partnership between Teach For America and the state of North Carolina. As a partner, Teach For America has committed to maximizing our contribution to the state by recruiting, training, and supporting excellent, diverse teachers and leaders and growing our number of alumni living and working in North Carolina. We are also committed to strengthening the North Carolina Teacher Corps.

In the first quarter, we had the honor of supporting our newest group of teachers as they enter the classroom for the 2018-2019 school year. Our corps members attend a summer training to prepare them to be excellent teachers and leaders for North Carolina's students. Our Eastern North Carolina region hosts their own local summer training, called residency, in Lenoir and Northampton counties.

By basing our summer programming in Eastern North Carolina, we have contributed more than \$700,000 to local businesses and community members via housing, food, and staffing opportunities. Moreover, our corps members are receiving best-in-class training as they enter the classroom.

During residency, Eastern North Carolina corps members live in apartment-style housing at Chowan University. Living in the region allows corps members to better understand the communities they will serve. Instead of focusing on a wide range of topics, the residency program focuses on giving educators a few key items they can implement on day one of teaching. Corps members practice with each other as students before practicing with actual students.

The summer program involves teaching students Monday to Thursday, and each day is divided into three time blocks. In the morning, corps members teach one block in either math, English, social studies, or science. The afternoon time is for corps members to work with each other and with instructional coaches to develop skills. Coaches move throughout the residency program, offering real-time instruction to corps members. Corps members also participate in lunch duty, bus duty, and other tasks around the school.

“It’s been more challenging in ways that I didn’t imagine, but I have learned more than I ever thought I would,” said Laura Hebard, an incoming corps member. “And more so coming from just experience more than anything else, I have realized how much the work of a teacher is never done.”¹



Corps member Laura Hebard teaches a lesson on respiration during Teach for America-Eastern North Carolina residency

¹ Lee, Laura. “Teach for America Residency Program Challenges New Recruits.” EducationNC, 3 Aug. 2018, www.ednc.org/2018/08/03/teach-for-america-residency-program-teaches-and-challenges-new-recruits/. See Appendix A

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Lei Covington, director of the Lenoir County residency site, said of the program:

“We are helping support educational leaders. For this summer that means that our teachers will not leave with all the answers, but they will leave being reflective educators, having those skills and that mindset. Give me the information and let me work through it. Let me come in here and be a team player. We’re also working with teachers who see themselves as coming in and being part of a community. That makes a huge difference.”²

All of our incoming teachers join the growing network of Teach For America corps members and alumni across the state committed to providing an excellent education to North Carolina’s, and the nation’s, students. As our alumni base continues to grow and mature, our incoming corps members are exposed to more and more examples of the diverse, innovative talent that exists in our network—talent that is working to eliminate educational inequity from a variety of fields.

We are thankful for the state’s continued investment, which allows us to find promising leaders, develop and cultivate their leadership skills and mindsets through classroom teaching, and support their leadership throughout their lifetime. We are pleased to update you on our progress in the first quarter.

Statewide Impact

Teach For America’s greatest contribution continues to be the diverse, innovative, and courageous leadership force that we bring to North Carolina and support across our state. Our network of individuals continues to expand opportunity for children through working in classrooms, schools, and from every sector, field, and place where people shape the broader systems in which schools operate.

Today, 28 years since we began partnering with North Carolina, we are over 2,000 individuals strong living and working in nearly two thirds of the counties in our state. We continue to be committed to leveraging the scale and diversity of our network to make sure we are learning faster and smarter. Below is a spotlight on a few of the talented individuals in our network and the work they are leading in North Carolina.

Jenny O’Meara

After graduating from State University of New York College at Geneseo, Jenny joined the 2011 Eastern North Carolina Corps where she taught high school math at Warren County High School. Upon completion of the corps, she joined the Northeast Leadership Academy, where she trained to become a principal.

As the current principal of Phillips Middle School in Edgecombe County, Jenny welcomed in the newest class of middle school students this August. EdNC featured Jenny in their back-to-school segment, which shows video of O’Meara and her staff visiting students’ homes before the first day of school. While talking with a student, Miracle, Jenny asks her about her favorite teacher. Miracle cites Mr. Buchanan, an Eastern North Carolina 2017 corps member.³



Jenny O'Meara
Principal, Phillips Middle
School

² Holmes, Patrick. “TFA Summer School Director Has Track Record of Helping New Teachers Hit Stride.” The Free Press, The Free Press, 3 July 2018, www.kinston.com/news/20180703/tfa-summer-school-director-has-track-record-of-helping-new-teachers-hit-stride. See Appendix B

³ Rash, Mebane. “Welcome Back to School, North Carolina.” EducationNC, 20 Aug. 2018, www.ednc.org/2018/08/20/welcome-back-to-school-north-carolina/. See Appendix C

Katelin Row

Katie Row graduated from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 2010 and upon graduation she joined the Teach For America Eastern North Carolina corps. She was an elementary school teacher at Colerain Elementary in Bertie County. After her time in the classroom, she enrolled in the North East Leadership Academy and became principal of Coker-Wimberly Elementary School.

Using flexibility granted to the school through a restart status, Katelin implemented “opportunity culture,” a staffing approach that creates higher-paid positions for highly-effective teachers to reach more students. There are multi-classroom leaders for both reading and math in early grades that provide extra support and coaching for kindergarten teachers. Row is hopeful that the school’s strategy will raise student performance.

For the second year, Coker-Wimberly kindergarteners switch classes, which usually does not happen until later grades. This subject specialization is aimed to help teachers be able to focus on the specific needs of students in each subject.⁴



*Katelin Row Principal,
Coker-Wimberly
Elementary*

Vichitra Jagannathan and Seth Saeugling

Vichitra Jagannathan graduated from Princeton University and joined Teach For America, Eastern North Carolina in 2011. Seth Saeugling graduated from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and joined Teach For America in 2012. Together, they founded the Rural Opportunity Institute, which was recently selected to present at the fall Institute for Emerging Issues’ fall conference.



*Vichitra Jagannathan & Seth Saeugling,
Founders, Rural Opportunity Institute*

The Rural Opportunity Institute joins four other community initiatives selected from over 30 applicants from across the state. These communities are actively working on successful or promising initiatives to increase civic engagement to address critical community challenges.

“Rural Opportunity Institute chose to apply because we have been inspired and energized by the diverse, cross-sector leadership and commitment to creating a trauma-informed, resilience-focused community,” said Vichi Jagannathan, co-founder of Rural Opportunity Institute.⁵

We are grateful to be able to support our corps members and alumni throughout their careers as they work to impact education from a variety of sectors. We are thankful for the state’s support that allows us to continue to cultivate our corps members’ and alumni’s leadership across the state.

⁴ Bell, Liz. “A Rural Start to Kindergarten: EdNC Explores Birth to Eight Experiences in Eastern North Carolina.” EducationNC, 23 Aug. 2018, www.ednc.org/2018/08/23/a-rural-start-to-kindergarten-ednc-explores-birth-to-eight-experiences-in-eastern-north-carolina/. See Appendix D

⁵ “Edgecombe Co. Rural Opportunity Institute to Be Showcased at Emerging Issues Forum.” EducationNC, 22 Aug. 2018, www.ednc.org/2018/08/22/edgecombe-co-rural-opportunity-institute-to-be-showcased-at-emerging-issues-forum/. See Appendix E

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North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC)

Teach for America is committed to partnering with the state to inspire more North Carolinians to teach and lead as educators here. While we know great teachers exist across the nation, we believe that teachers with personal ties to North Carolina can make a unique contribution to our state, bringing a special sense of urgency and commitment to educating North Carolina's children.

We know that personalized and individual, tailored contact with applicants is one of the strongest strategies in influencing applicants to preference a North Carolina region. As such, we significantly increased our communication strategies on our regional end to match the support candidates received from our national recruitment team. Last year, we surpassed our goal of establishing contact with at least 250 candidates with North Carolina ties. We conducted 130 one: one phone calls, hosted eight webinars specially designed for candidates with North Carolina ties, and engaged a total of 253 candidates across all windows (this could be via webinar, phone calls, emails and/or texts).

We currently have 133 corps members who identify as part of the North Carolina Teaching Corps who are teaching in their first or second year in the classroom. One hundred and eleven of them graduated from a North Carolina college or university and 93 of them are North Carolina natives. Our NCTC corps members represent 26 different North Carolina colleges and universities including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, Duke University, Davidson College, and Wake Forest University. Our North Carolina connected corps members make up a diverse group of teachers and leaders across the state:

- The average GPA is 3.42
- 58% come from a low-income background⁶
- 52% are people of color
- 35% are teaching math or science
- 38% are the first in their families to graduate from college

We will begin recruitment for our 2019 corps of teachers in October. This year, our recruitment plans include:

- **Alumni Outreach:** We will strategically match our North Carolina alumni callers with final round applicants based on their interests and career paths. Alumni will use these calls to inspire applicants to choose to teach in North Carolina rather than choosing to teach out of state.
- **NCTC Webinars:** We will host webinars specifically for North Carolinians moving into final round of interviews. These webinars will highlight stories of current corps members, alumni, and students with North Carolina ties who choose to lead in our state.
- **Strategic Stewardship:** Our staff will call all applicants with North Carolina ties who are rated as the most competitive and highly likely to be admitted to the corps. These applicants often have competing offers and we plan to use these calls as an opportunity to share more about the education landscape in North Carolina and why their leadership is needed in our state.
- **Statewide Calendar of Events:** We are building a statewide calendar of events across our regions that will be shared with our national recruitment team. This will allow recruiters to easily advertise our local events to prospective applicants.

⁶ As identified by receiving a full or partial PELL Grant

Regional Updates

Eastern North Carolina

Teach For America's greatest contribution has always been diverse, courageous leadership. We are a network of individuals who expand opportunity for children, working from classrooms, from schools, and from every sector, field, and place where people shape the broader systems in which schools operate. The Eastern North Carolina team is committed to maximizing this broad network of alumni across the region.

In the fourth quarter, EducationNC wrote an article about the impacts of ENC STEM, a summer program at the North Carolina School of Science and Math. ENC STEM was founded by Teach For America alumni Liz Chen, Grayson Cooper, and Dale Hammer and is an intense summer learning program focused on four low-income school districts and KIPP charter schools in North Carolina's northeast corner. The program was founded on the belief in the power of education to transform children by bringing forth their full potential.



Dale Hammer, Grayson Cooper, and Liz Chen, co-founders of ENC STEM

The ENC STEM Program encourages independent learning in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as well as a leadership segment which helps students develop resilience, grit and independent learning skills.

Now in its sixth year, approximately 100 students participated in two weeks of ENC STEM summer programming at Northampton County High School this summer.⁷

Charlotte

In the fourth quarter, Charlotte alumni Mario Jovan Shaw and Jason Terrell were named as the Charlotte Mecklenburg Black Chamber of Commerce 30 Under 30 honorees.⁸ Shaw and Terrell are the co-founders of Profound Gentlemen, an organization that seeks to recruit and support black males in the teaching profession.



Mario Jovan Shaw and Jason Terrell, co-founders of Profound Gentlemen

Current and aspiring male educators of color join Profound Gentleman and are in small-sized cohorts of educators in their region. Cohorts are led by an Impact Leader who serves as a life/career and instructional coach and receive an Impact Professional Development Plan, which establishes goals both professionally and for the community.

North Carolina Piedmont Triad

As our region in the North Carolina Piedmont Triad matures, so too does our alumni base. On August 21, alumni of our North Carolina Piedmont Triad region organized and hosted a back to school social for current and incoming corps members at a local business in Downtown Greensboro. This was a self-organized event, and showed the power of our alumni network.

⁷ Bendaas, Yasmin. "Eastern NC High School Students Blend Leadership and STEM Learning." EducationNC, 17 July 2018, www.ednc.org/2018/07/17/eastern-nc-high-school-students-blend-leadership-and-stem-learning/?utm_source=EdNC%2BSubscribers&utm_campaign=0e93815cc3-. See Appendix F

⁸ "2018 CMBCC 30 Under 30 Honorees." Charlotte Mecklenburg BLACK CHAMBER of Commerce, www.cmbcc.org/2018-30-under-30-honorees/. See Appendix G

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The goal of the event was to connect alumni with incoming corps members and help acclimate them to the Greensboro community. Alumni worked with local businesses to donate gift cards to be given away to the new teachers to help welcome them to the triad

Matt Killan, a Teach For America, North Carolina Piedmont Triad alum, said of the event: "It was a great way to connect with the incoming cohort of teachers, share professional experiences, and get to know the new community members better!"

Financial Reporting

Teach For America is steadfast in maximizing the state's investment through fiscal responsibility and investing donors in our important work in North Carolina. We remain grateful for the state's investment and are committed to making every public and private dollar work hard for students across our state. We look forward to updating the state on our progress in our annual and December quarterly report.

Teach for America residency program challenges new recruits

 ednc.org/2018/08/03/teach-for-america-residency-program-teaches-and-challenges-new-recruits/

By Laura Lee

August 3, 2018

Honesti, a rising sixth-grader, edges her hot pink high-top shoes to the edge of a piece of tape stuck to the tiled classroom floor. She concentrates as she prepares to take her shot from the makeshift three-point line. When she sinks the crumbled ball of paper into the garbage can “basket” a few feet away, she cracks a grin, and her teacher, Zach Misak, notes her points on the whiteboard. The competitive game of “trashketball” in this classroom at Conway Middle School in Northampton County looks like a purely recreational activity, but Honesti earned her spot at the three-point line by correctly solving multiplication problems.



The technique is one part of the methodology Misak is learning as part of his training as a corps member at Teach for America of Eastern North Carolina’s residency program. Residencies, which are similar to “medical residencies for aspiring doctors,” are a growing trend in teacher preparation, according to [a recent EWA article](#).

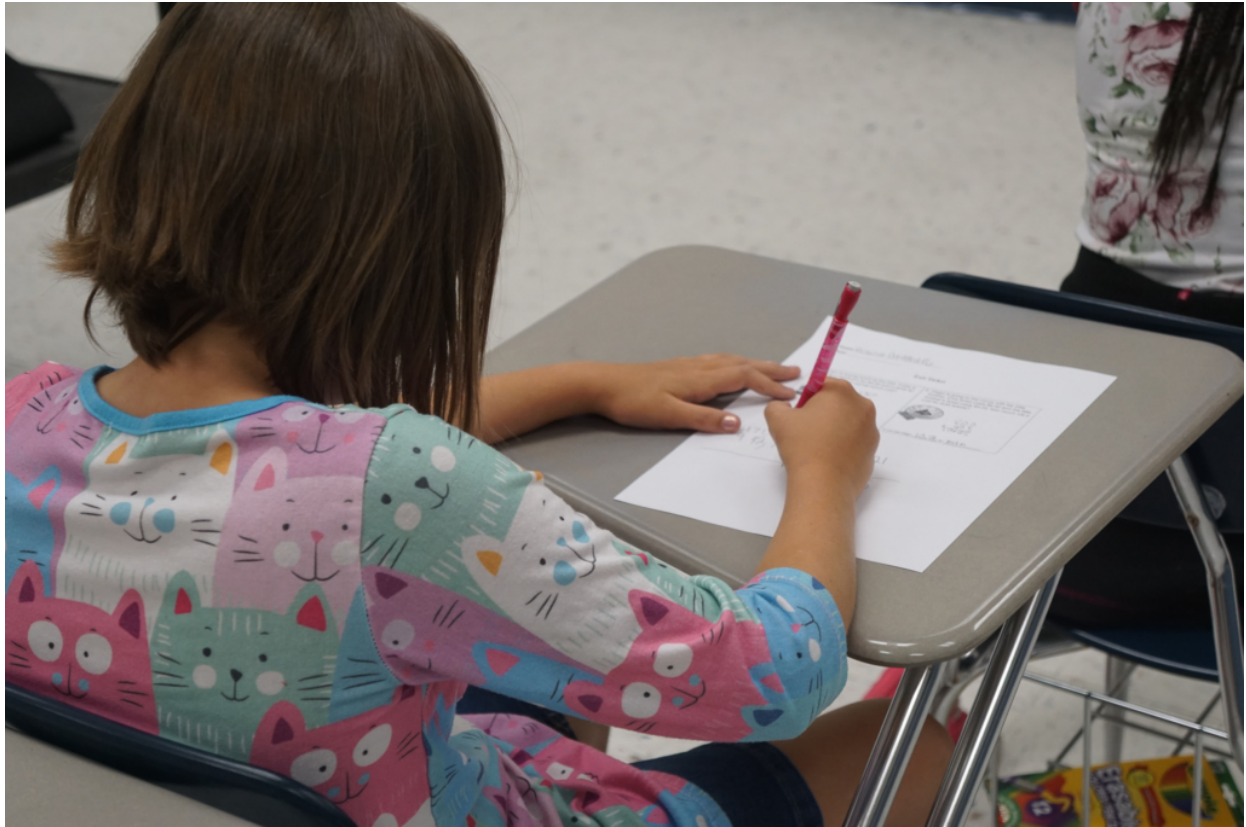
Following an orientation period, Misak and 65 other corps members spend four and a half weeks practicing in classrooms and preparing to guide their own middle and high school classrooms in the fall. The cohort comes from all over the country to eastern North Carolina where they will teach in the fall. Coaches and other staff offer guidance and feedback as the new recruits learn to lead a classroom.

Eastern North Carolina corps members live in apartment-style housing at Chowan University. Living in the region allows corps members to better understand the communities they will serve, says Katy Turnbull, managing director of leadership continuum for Teach for America-Eastern North Carolina.

Instead of focusing on a wide range of topics, the residency program focuses on giving educators a few key items they can implement on day one of teaching, says Michelle Fockler, director of residency for Teach for America of Eastern North Carolina. Corps members practice with each other as students before practicing with actual students, she says.

The class sizes are smaller than those corps members will teach in the fall. Misak’s math class had only three students, a much smaller cohort than he had anticipated. While the class size is smaller, the challenges are large. Students in the residency program are middle school students in Northampton County who are “on the bubble” for passing their grades, Fockler

says. The program is not mandatory for the 150 students — almost all of whom are free-or-reduced-lunch eligible— but participation could help a struggling student move to the next grade level. While corps members do not have decision-making authority on promotion, they gather data and make recommendations to principals, Fockler says.



A student works on math problems during the Teach for America residency program at Conway Middle School. Aislinn Antrim/EdNC.

The daily structure differs from earlier versions of Teach for America institutes which often housed corps members in dorms and required structured programming participation after dinner. The function of the residency program is to “mimic as closely as possible what the real teaching year is going to be like,” Fockler says. “You’re going to go home, and you’re going to have to cook dinner for yourself, and you’re doing to have to get all your grading done, and you’re going to have to lesson plan.”

The summer program involves students Monday to Thursday, and each day is divided into three time blocks. In the morning, corps members teach one block in either math, English, social studies, or science. The afternoon time is for corps members to work with each other and with instructional coaches to develop skills. Coaches move throughout the residency program, offering real-time instruction to corps members. Corps members also participate in lunch duty, bus duty, and other tasks around the school.

Corps member Kimberly Burton teaches one of the English blocks for rising sixth-graders. Electronic music plays from a laptop as two groups of students worked on exercises about providing supporting evidence in writing. Miss Burton, or Miss B. as the kids call her,

encourages students to be proactive in their learning. “If you don’t know something, you ask a question, right?” she says. When one student asks, “What time is it?” another answers without missing a beat: “Time for you to work.”



Corps member Kimberly Burton works with students at the Teach for America residency program in Northampton county.
Aislinn Antrim/EdNC.

Mastery of the subject is just one part of the training at Conway. The new teachers also wrestle with classroom management. One math instructor repeatedly instructs students to “work silently” over the chatter of teenage boys. Learning how to address classroom culture is part of the intended curriculum, Fockler says.

Laura Hebard, a North Carolina State University graduate, teaches rising eighth-graders in their science block in residency. She leads students through a conversation about the way the body uses proteins. As students worked on copying down information for the upcoming lab, a coach huddles with Hebard and offered guidance on the lesson. Hebard nods in agreement and returns to the instruction. The feedback is designed to give corps members an immediate opportunity to make adjustments.

In a break between blocks, Hebard acknowledges the challenge of classroom management. “These students, I am so grateful to them, because they have taught me so much and challenged me in ways, but...we are the notorious class on the hallway for being the rowdy group.”

Hebard says she and her colleagues discuss how working with a small group of challenging students in the summer will hopefully prepare them for teaching a larger group in the fall.

“It has been incredibly difficult and I have by no means have it under control,” she says. “I have a relationship with them now which I’m proud of, but in terms of managing, it is constant.”

Hebard, who will teach ninth grade environmental science at Gaston KIPP school in the fall, looks forward to having a classroom of her own, both in terms of physical space and culture.



Corps member Laura Hebard teaches a lesson on respiration during Teach for America-Eastern North Carolina residency. Aislinn Antrim/EdNC.

In the science class at Conway, she moves the conversation from ways the body used protein to ways the body required oxygen. She asks the students if they are familiar with the recent headlines about the group of Thai boys stuck in a cave and connects the example to a lesson about the need for oxygen.

“What is the problem with being stuck in a cave?” she asks. “You’ve got no oxygen!” a student answers. Hebard segues into a conversation about aerobic and anaerobic respiration. “They found a way to conserve as much oxygen as possible, and that’s what we are going to be doing with our lab,” she says.

The students alternate between disruptive and engaged, but Hebard maintains a positive and energetic tone. She reminds them for the need for raised hands, and she pauses to wait for silence.

“It’s been more challenging in ways that I didn’t imagine, but I have learned more than I ever thought I would,” Hebard says. “And more so coming from just experience more than anything else, I have realized how much the work of a teacher is never done.”



TFA Summer School director has track record of helping new teachers hit stride

By Patrick Holmes / Lenoir County Schools

Posted Jul 3, 2018 at 1:32 PM

Although she doesn't share their background exactly, Lei Covington understands perfectly the power of that conversion experience that has turned many a Teach for America adherent away from the world of commerce and toward the calling of education.

After all, she was just a semester away from finishing law school, from a career in the courtroom or a boardroom, when she had a chance encounter with the classroom.

"My professor had a street law program he was starting at a charter school, so I ended up helping him with the classroom and saw so many of the injustices that were happening consistently," Covington said. "So many of the not-good choices students had made were rooted in power and privilege and their lack thereof. I was thinking, How do we catch students at that point in time? I decided I wanted to catch them before I prosecuted them."

By "catch" she means to intervene, to alter, to assist. Her professional history – a dizzyingly varied career in education that has brought her to Lenoir County as director of the summer school that Teach for America operates in conjunction with Lenoir County Public Schools – is largely a history of helping people reach their potential, whether as a teacher or as a teacher coach or as a staffer with Teach for America, the national organization that provides a pathway into teaching for college graduates with skills but without the background that traditionally leads to licensure.

After that initial teaching experience while a student at the University of Dayton (Ill.) School of Law, where she decided early intervention was the best way to protect vulnerable children from harmful influences, Covington's route into education has been more traditional than the usual TFA experience.

A native of Richmond County and a graduate of the North Carolina School of Science and Math, she earned a bachelor's degree from Salem College before heading to law school and being bitten by the teaching bug. Returning to her home state, she obtained a master's of arts degree in teaching from East Carolina University and, in 2010, found a job teaching fourth grade in Princeville, in Edgecombe County.

“I started teaching and just fell in love with education,” Covington said. “I decided this was where I wanted to be.”

At the end of her second school year in Princeville, at the urging of two Teach for America teachers on the faculty there, Covington joined TFA for summer work as a teacher coach at the organization’s Delta training institute in Cleveland, Miss.

It was the first of a series of jobs, part time and full time, with TFA: a teacher coach at the summer training institute in Tulsa, Okla., a staffer with Teach for America as manager of teacher leadership development for two years, director of the TFA summer school in Philadelphia and four years on the Delta institute’s management team.

“This past year, I decided I wanted to come back closer to home because North Carolina had started doing theirs,” she said.

What Teach for America in Eastern North Carolina had started were regional training centers in Lenoir and Northampton counties – summer schools that serve the dual purpose of extending learning for public school students and giving TFA corps members, the soon-to-be teachers, valuable classroom experience under expert supervision.

“There’s something about being in the school director’s role,” Covington said, comparing it to other TFA positions she’s held. “You get a lot more hands-on with kids. You get to see the coaching happening. The thing that I love the most is the professional development happening.

“I have the ability to be able to say I’m going to create the platform for you all to bring your best selves into this space and do the work. That makes me really happy. My job is to come in with a flashlight and shine a light on the greatness that they already are. I get to push them and support them.”

This summer, the third year TFA and LCPS have partnered on summer school, Covington is supervising a staff of nine, 37 TFA corps members and 300 elementary-age students at Contentnea-Savannah K-8 School. After five weeks of summer school and a couple of additional weeks of training, the newly minted teachers will fan out into 13 school districts in eastern North Carolina to begin their two-year commitment.

TFA helps place them in an environment where they are most likely to succeed, Covington says, but first the training gets them accustomed to a landscape that may be strange and a rural lifestyle that may be stranger.

“There’s a real life component to it,” she said. “We have teachers coming in from California, from New York, so it’s a lot different.”

A regional training center like the Lenoir County site – compared to the national institutes in Mississippi or Philadelphia that might host corps members from a half-dozen different states – offers the advantage of context. Not only are trainees being specifically schooled in one set of state-mandated curriculum standards, they are getting a feel for where they will live and work.

“We have teachers that are going to be in the exact county they are in right now,” she said. “Once we get farther into the summer, they’re going to have to start thinking about housing, where am I staying, what does that house look like. That’s a lot easier to deal with on a weekend here than it is if you’re in the Mississippi Delta 13 hours away.”

Typically, LCPS has about 25 TFA corps members among its nearly 550 classroom teachers and may hire a half-dozen or so of this summer’s group. As lateral-entry teachers, those still acquiring the requisite credits for state certification, they receive targeted assistance through the district’s Beginning Teacher Program, which pairs all new teachers with mentors and requires their participation in a year-long development program.

All new teachers need help with the specifics, Covington says. What TFA training instills, she thinks, is an attitude of openness, not all the answers.

“We are not a pipeline of teachers,” she said. “We are helping support educational leaders. For this summer that means that our teachers will not leave with all the answers, but they will leave being reflective educators, having those skills and that mindset. Give me the information and let me work through it. Let me come in here and be a team player. We’re also working with teachers who see themselves as coming in and being part of a community. That makes a huge difference.”

Having lived in North Carolina most of her life, living now in Harnett County and planning to return in the fall to her work as an instructional coach at a school in Fayetteville, Covington knows the friendliness this summer’s batch of TFA teachers will encounter wherever they end up in eastern North Carolina. She’s already encountered it in Kinston at her summer school.

“I walked in and got exactly what I was expected from the custodial staff, from the front office, from the parents,” she said. “It was a warm welcome. It’s community.”

Welcome back to school, North Carolina

 ednc.org/2018/08/20/welcome-back-to-school-north-carolina/

By Mebane Rash

August 20, 2018

“Bye, I love you,” a mother yells down the school hallway just after dropping her daughter off at Phillips Middle School in Edgecombe County. It was the first day back to school after summer break.

The school counselor, Angela Jones, said it was hard to sleep the night before, and the principal, Jenny O’Meara, quickly chimed in, “I woke up, and I felt like a kid on Christmas morning.”

O’Meara tells me that the night before she had been researching languages in Guatemala. There are 21, she learned. A new student speaks one of them, Popti’, and O’Meara is trying to figure out how to communicate with him.



For Jessica Parker, the assistant principal, it is her first year as a Bulldog, the mascot for Phillips Middle School. She knows many of the students already from her work at a local elementary school. Parker’s excitement is contagious. She is excited to see the students, and they are excited to see her.

The doors have been painted with black chalkboard paint, and the teachers have put their own mark on them using colored chalk to inspire.

Miracle, a student who wants to grow up and become a lawyer, is a Phillips Bulldog. If you haven’t seen [our video about Miracle](#), take a look. I was there to welcome her — and all of our students — back to school. #iseeUbulldog #bestyearever

From new students to getting the classrooms ready to transportation to learning the school chants to preparing lesson plans to thousands of other details...

Welcome back to school, North Carolina.

Thank you to our teachers, principals, and all other school leaders.

Sunrise before the start of the school day.



Practicing the school chants.

Greeting Miracle and other students as they get off the bus.









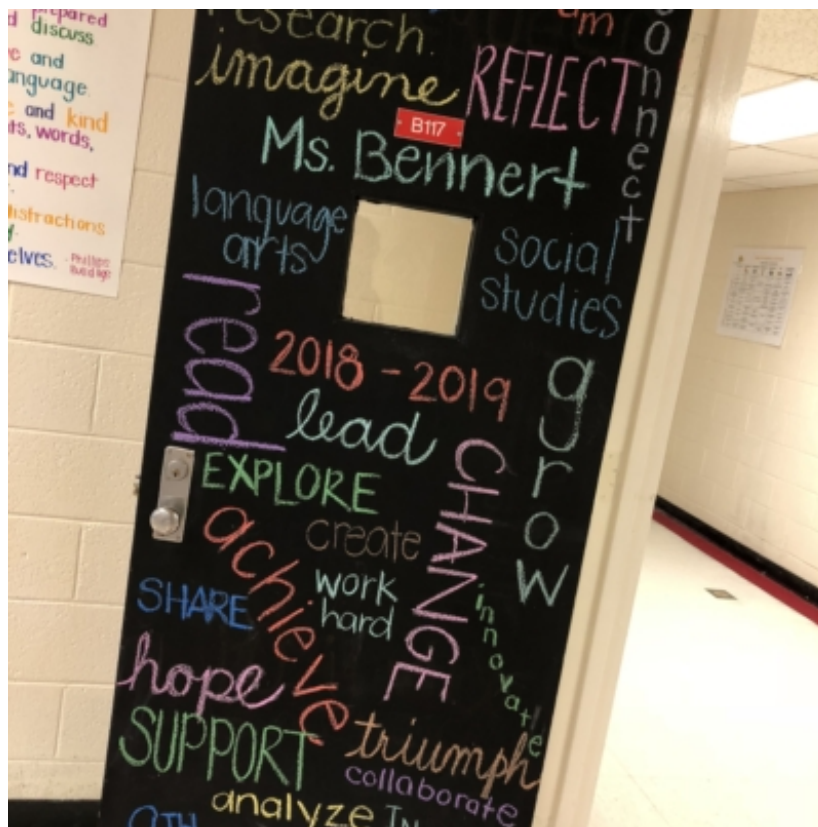
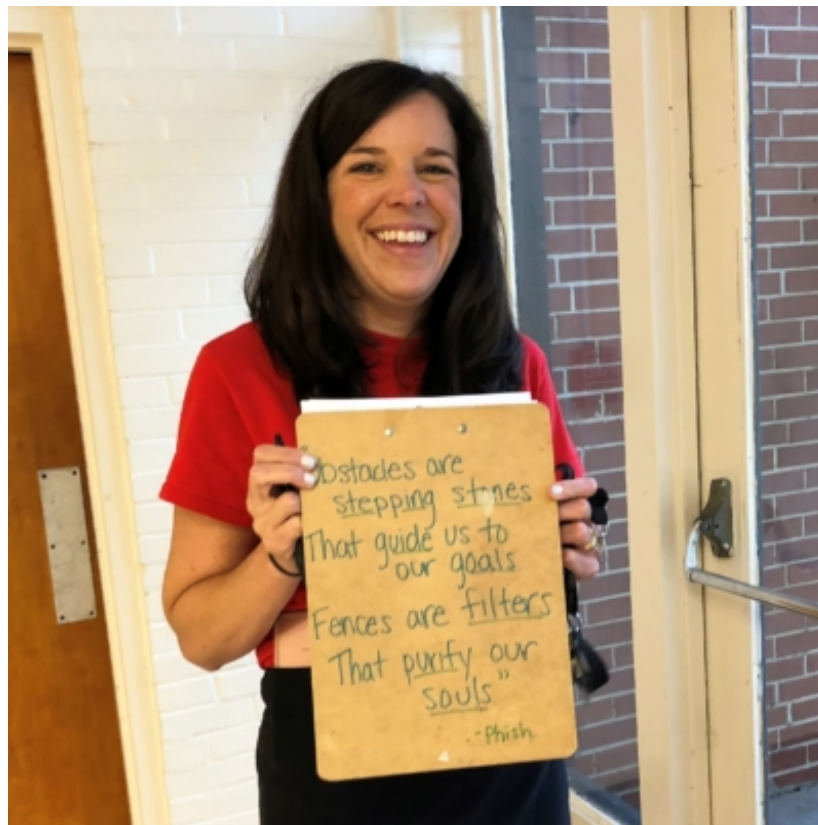
All of the students at Phillips Middle gather in the cafeteria to start the school year.













The Editor's Notes

A rural start to kindergarten: EdNC explores birth to eight experiences in eastern North Carolina

ednc.org/2018/08/23/a-rural-start-to-kindergarten-ednc-explores-birth-to-eight-experiences-in-eastern-north-carolina/

By Liz Bell

August 23, 2018

EdNC is exploring the experiences of young children from infancy to third grade in rural eastern North Carolina supported by a grant from ChildTrust Foundation. The research and reporting, which started at the end of last school year, will look at the issues children, families, and schools navigate at the start of kindergarten in Edgecombe, Nash, and Halifax counties.

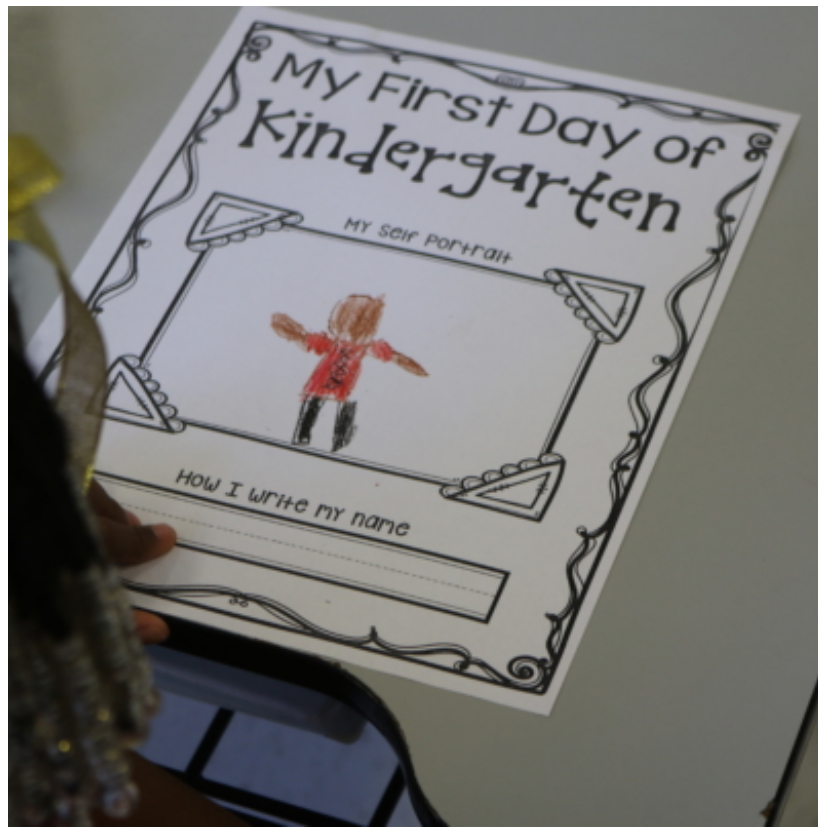
While reviewing her end-of-year student assessments in May, about half of the names on Dale Murray's kindergarten class roster were in red. Murray, who has taught kindergarten at Bailey Elementary for more than 20 years, wished red meant something besides below-grade-level in reading.



"I don't like it," Murray said. "But I know I've done my job. I know they came in knowing nothing and I see how they've grown."

Murray pointed to each red name and explained the student's situation. Some students were English-learners. Some never went to preschool. Some will need special intervention and support because of developmental delays. Others had multiple circumstances that set them back. "It is a combination," she said.

That combination of factors hindering a student's learning during his or her first year of schooling is specific to the child. In rural eastern North Carolina — between the booming Triangle and the coast — those factors are often compounded by the stresses of poverty. Compared to North Carolina's median income from 2012 to 2016 of \$48,256, Nash County's from the same period was \$43,804, Halifax County's was \$32,549, and Edgecombe County's was \$32,398.



Liz Bell/EducationNC



Lyric Clark draws herself during her first day of kindergarten at Coker-Wimberly Elementary.
Liz Bell/EducationNC

A recent study by researchers from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and New York University of children growing up in poverty in the rural Southeast found that the depth and persistence of poverty during the first five years of life is related to lower language, academic, and executive functioning skills.

As Murray noted in her classroom, a student's ability to perform on grade level by the end of kindergarten also has a lot to do with whether or not the child attended preschool and the quality of that program. "We can see growth, but they're not where they would have been if they had had that initial push," she said, referring to children who did not attend any kind of preschool before kindergarten.

Researchers at UNC's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute have been evaluating NC Pre-K, the state's public preschool for at-risk four-year-olds, since its inception in 2001. The group's most recent study of 2015-16 NC Pre-K participation found children who attended the program had higher executive function related to working memory at the end of kindergarten and better math skills. However, NC Pre-K participation did not have a positive correlation with literacy skills by the end of kindergarten.



Lauren Scott works on a puzzle during a free-play station on her first day of kindergarten at Coker-Wimberly Elementary School in Edgecombe County. Liz Bell/EducationNC

The difference between preschool and no preschool can be seen in basic skills and behaviors on the first day of kindergarten, Murray said. She said she expects children to be able to stand in line, stay in a seat, write his or her name, hold a pencil, cut with scissors, follow directions, and use the bathroom. North Carolina's official standards for kindergarten readiness, which

are documented in a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA), are divided into domains that include “language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development.” Teachers are supposed to observe children in these areas and use results to differentiate instruction.

In Edgecombe, Nash, and Halifax counties, quality of child care centers has greatly improved since the start of the century with support from Smart Start partnerships like the Down East Partnership for Children in Nash and Edgecombe, and Halifax-Warren Smart Start Partnership in Halifax. In 2016-17, the most recent data available from the N.C. Partnership for Children, 89 percent of Edgecombe children birth to five years old in regulated child care were in either a four- or five-star setting. In Halifax, 73 percent of young children in child care were in four- or five-star settings. And in Nash, 68 percent of young children in child care were in four- or five-star care. Those percentages have gone up from the following in 2000-01: 47 percent in Edgecombe, 53 percent in Halifax, and 48 percent in Nash.

Looking further into the academic lives of students, third-grade reading proficiency rates, which indicate student success in high school, were lower than the statewide rate for all three school districts in 2017. Statewide, 57.9 percent of third graders passed the End of Grade reading test by scoring either a 3, 4, or 5. According to [North Carolina School Report Cards](#), scoring a 3 indicates the student is on grade level and scoring a 4 or 5 indicates career and college readiness. In Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools, 40.5 percent of third graders in 2017 passed the test. In Edgecombe County Public Schools, 32.5 percent of third graders in 2017 passed the test. And in Halifax County Public Schools, 38.2 percent passed the test.

The quality of early experiences is being tied to the health and economic development of entire communities. Henrietta Zalkind, executive director of the Down East Partnership for Children, which serves as the preschool infrastructure for Nash and Edgecombe counties, presented in July at [Energizing Rural North Carolina](#) on the return on investment in children’s early years.

“Early childhood is really all of the things that happen between when a child is conceived and by age eight,” Zalkind said. “And the reason that we focus on those early years is because that’s when you develop the academic and the social skills and the problem-solving skills, and you have heard over and over again, that that’s what business needs. That’s who the workforce of tomorrow is gonna be. By age eight, kids should have learned to read so that they can read to learn.”

Annette Kent, Coker-Wimberly Elementary kindergarten teacher, starts teaching kids to read on the first day of school. Liz Bell/EducationNC

That turning point — from learning to read to reading to learn — is one often repeated by early education advocates. Third-grade reading proficiency’s correlation with high school completion has dominated statewide conversations across the state’s education, government, nonprofit,

and business spheres. Political leaders on both sides of the aisle have used early literacy as a talking point. In July 2012, the General Assembly started Read to Achieve, legislation that gives extra support to children who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

The Republican-dominated General Assembly included plans in their 2017-19 biennial budget for an additional allotment to NC Pre-K of \$9.35 million for 2019-20 and \$18.7 million for 2020-2021. And then in February 2018, lawmakers added even more funds to eliminate the NC Pre-K waiting list altogether by 2020-21. Democratic Governor Roy Cooper spoke of early childhood's importance at Energizing Rural North Carolina answering a question from EducationNC.

"When you're talking about early childhood, the evidence is overwhelming that kids who have early childhood and pre-K succeed at a much faster rate than those that do not," Cooper said. "So this is an early investment. There's a reason why a number of CEOs of tech companies came to the General Assembly to lobby for pre-K. Because they saw the importance of early childhood education."

That group of CEOs came before the legislature in February 2017, headed by SAS CEO Jim Goodnight, and presented economic arguments of early education and early literacy.

Since 2015, the non-profit North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation has spearheaded both a campaign across the state to promote more reading proficiency in low-income communities and a cross-sector and data-driven Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative to outline shared measures and goals for children from birth to eight years old.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson, who heads the state education department, has repeatedly focused on early literacy since his 2016 election, using Read to Achieve funds for K-3 literacy materials, professional development programs, and technology since March.

The B-3 Interagency Council was formed by statute last year as an attempt to enhance collaboration between the governing bodies that oversee early childhood education (the Department of Health and Human Services) and the state's K-12 system (the Department of Public Instruction) and smooth transitions between the systems.

All of this cross-sector and bipartisan momentum around early childhood education begs the question: What is happening in the rural classroom? Over the course of the coming months, EdNC will spend time in the following three elementary schools in three counties to look at how they teach their youngest learners and what those learners need.



Taylor McNab, a second-year kindergarten teacher, goes over the days of the week with her class on the first day of school.
Liz Bell/EducationNC

Coker-Wimberly Elementary School

About 72 percent of the 284 students at Coker-Wimberly Elementary School in Edgecombe County were economically disadvantaged, according to the school's 2016-17 state report card. In 2016-17, the school received an F performance grade, which is calculated by the state using a formula of 80 percent achievement and 20 percent student growth. In the same school year, Coker-Wimberly did not meet the state's growth standards. In 2017, 23.4 percent of third graders made a 3, 4, or 5 on the End of Grade reading assessment.

This school year, about 65 percent of Coker-Wimberly students are black, 20 percent are Hispanic, and 9 percent are white. The school is headed by Katelin Row, a graduate of N.C. State University's accelerated principal preparation program called NELA. Using flexibility granted to the school through a restart status, Coker-Wimberly started at the beginning of last week, which is earlier than most North Carolina schools.



A bulletin board hanging in Coker-Wimberly Elementary's halls welcomes students back to school. Liz Bell/EducationNC

Through that same status, Row has implemented “opportunity culture,” a staffing approach that creates higher-paid positions for highly-effective teachers to reach more students. There are multi-classroom leaders for both reading and math in early grades that provide extra support and coaching for kindergarten teachers. Row is hopeful that the school’s strategy will raise student performance.

For the second year, Coker-Wimberly kindergarteners switch classes, which usually does not happen until later grades. This subject specialization is aimed to help teachers be able to focus on the specific needs of students in each subject but can prove difficult when it comes to classroom management.

Bailey Elementary School

About 79 percent of the 626 students at Bailey Elementary School in Nash County were economically disadvantaged, according to the school’s 2016-17 state report card. In 2016-17, the school received a C performance grade. The school also met the state’s growth standards that year. In 2017, 45.3 percent of third graders made a 3, 4, or 5 on the End of Grade reading assessment.

According to Principal Mary Jones, about 200 Bailey students last year were English-learners. The surrounding community is heavily agricultural and some migrant families with seasonal jobs have students attending Bailey. Around 50 percent of Bailey students last year were Hispanic, 33 percent were white, and 13 percent were black.

Jones is continuing a dual language program this year, where both native Spanish and English speakers are taught in Spanish. The kindergarten class from last year will move with its teacher up to first grade this year. The program uses Participate (formerly known as VIF) to employ teachers from Spanish-speaking countries to teach at Bailey.

Scotland Neck Elementary School

About 85 percent of the 224 students at Scotland Neck Elementary School in Halifax County were economically disadvantaged, according to the [school's 2016-17 state report card](#). In 2016-17, the school received a D performance grade. The school also met the state's growth standards last year. In 2017, 36.2 percent of third graders made a 3, 4, or 5 on the End of Grade reading assessment.

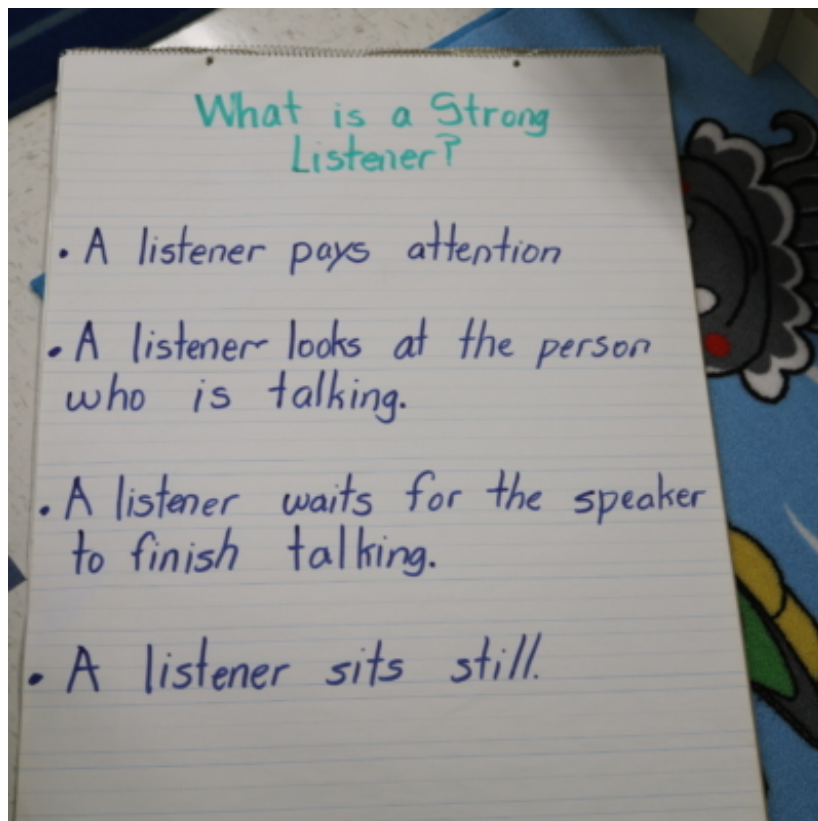
Last year, 86 percent of students were black, 10 percent were Hispanic, and 4 percent were white. A new principal this year at Scotland Neck, Benjamin Eustice has been stunned at the level of parental involvement and community engagement he has seen so far. During the summer, Eustice was surprised that 70 out of 85 students who needed extra support showed up for optional remediation courses.

Eustice has had difficulty filling teacher vacancies during his first year. He said he is focused on creating a positive and proactive mindset within the classroom in the coming year to reduce a physical violence problem he has noticed.

"My focus will be creating that whole-child learner, not just somebody who's good at math, not just somebody who's good at reading, but somebody who does everything and is involved in everything — and you have a strong student based on their beliefs and not only their smarts," Eustice said. "Again, creating a leader."



Liz Bell/EducationNC



Liz Bell/EducationNC



Lyric Clark finds her seat on her first day of kindergarten at Coker-Wimberly. Liz Bell/EducationNC

The importance of this first year, Coker-Wimberly kindergarten teacher Taylor McNab said, can be seen in children's lives years later. McNab taught math to fifth and third graders before transitioning to kindergarten last school year.

"Coming from fifth grade and third grade actually helped me, because I saw what they didn't have, so now I kind of know what to lay down more," she said. "I had third graders and fifth graders who couldn't add double digits. And I'm like, 'Okay, they obviously missed something.' It was really cool coming down, because you get to really focus on what they missed and meet them where they're at."

Continue to check back at EdNC.org to delve into the stories of kindergarteners and their families, schools, and communities.

[News](#)

Edgecombe Co. Rural Opportunity Institute to be showcased at Emerging Issues Forum

 ednc.org/2018/08/22/edgecombe-co-rural-opportunity-institute-to-be-showcased-at-emerging-issues-forum/

By Staff

August 22, 2018

The following is a press release from the Institute for Emerging Issues at NC State



The Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) at North Carolina State University has selected Edgecombe County's Rural Opportunity Institute to be showcased at the Emerging Issues Forum "ReCONNECT to Community" in Asheville on Sept. 17, 2018.

The Rural Opportunity Institute joins four other community initiatives selected from over 30 applicants from across the state. These communities are actively working on successful or promising initiatives to increase civic engagement to address critical community challenges. Each community team will share their initiative with a statewide audience at the forum and receive additional training and technical support from IEI to amplify their work.

"At the Institute for Emerging Issues, we believe that local communities can help launch us on the path to reconnection," explained Maggie Woods, a policy and program manager at IEI. "We were impressed by how this collaboration is addressing critical issues through innovative community trainings and coalition building."

"Rural Opportunity Institute chose to apply because we have been inspired and energized by the diverse, cross-sector leadership and commitment to creating a trauma-informed, resilience-focused community," said Vichi Jagannathan, co-founder of Rural Opportunity Institute.

The four other community initiatives selected are: The Community Innovation Lab at the Kenan Institute for the Arts (Winston-Salem), Asheville City Schools Foundation (Asheville), Explore Elkin (Elkin), and One Team. One Goal. One Community. (Elizabeth City).

IEI's Emerging Issues Forum "ReConnect To Community: Solving Problems Together for a More Prosperous Future," is Sept. 17, 2018 at the Asheville Crowne Plaza Resort in Asheville, NC. Other speakers at the forum include New York Times columnist David Brooks, North

Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, UNC Asheville Executive Director of Community Engagement Dr. Darin Waters, and North Carolina State University Provost Dr. Warwick Arden.

For more information and to register for the forum, visit emergingissues.org.

About the Institute for Emerging Issues:

Housed at North Carolina State University, the Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) is a nonpartisan public policy, “connect-think-and-do” tank focused on North Carolina’s future prosperity. Please visit emergingissues.org for more information.

Press Release

Eastern NC high school students blend leadership and STEM learning

 ednc.org/2018/07/17/eastern-nc-high-school-students-blend-leadership-and-stem-learning/

By Yasmin Bendaas

July 17, 2018



Students at the ENC STEM summer program perform an experiment using oil eating microbes. Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC

High school students pored over tables topped with beakers, lab flasks, and test tubes at the North Carolina School of Science and Math last week. Pipettes in hand, the students prepared to conduct an experiment to test the best conditions for oil-eating microbes as they simulated saving the Gulf of Mexico from an oil spill.



Students use a pipette to fill beakers at the NC School of Science and Math. Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC

“We’re looking at how scientists work together to solve environmental problems in their community,” said Caroline Harris, an instructor and project officer for Eastern North Carolina STEM.

Eastern North Carolina STEM (ENC STEM) launched in 2013 with programming to provide STEM learning opportunities for high school students in disadvantaged communities. Now in its sixth year, approximately 100 students participated in two weeks of ENC STEM summer programming at Northampton County High School. Of those students, 70 were selected to complete the third week at the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM).

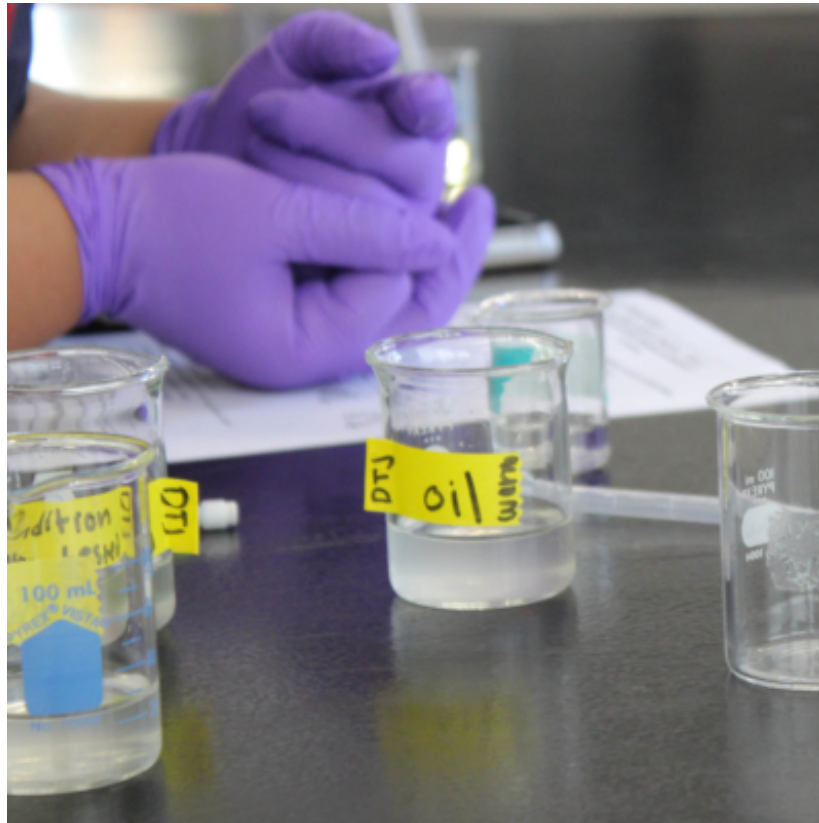


“It gives me a college feel because I have to wake myself up for all my classes. I [have] to be in class on time every day. I [have] to get used to walking around a big campus,” said Montaya Greene, a recent graduate of Northampton High School who will be attending Fayetteville State University in the fall.



Seventy students spent their third week of the ENC STEM program at the NC School of

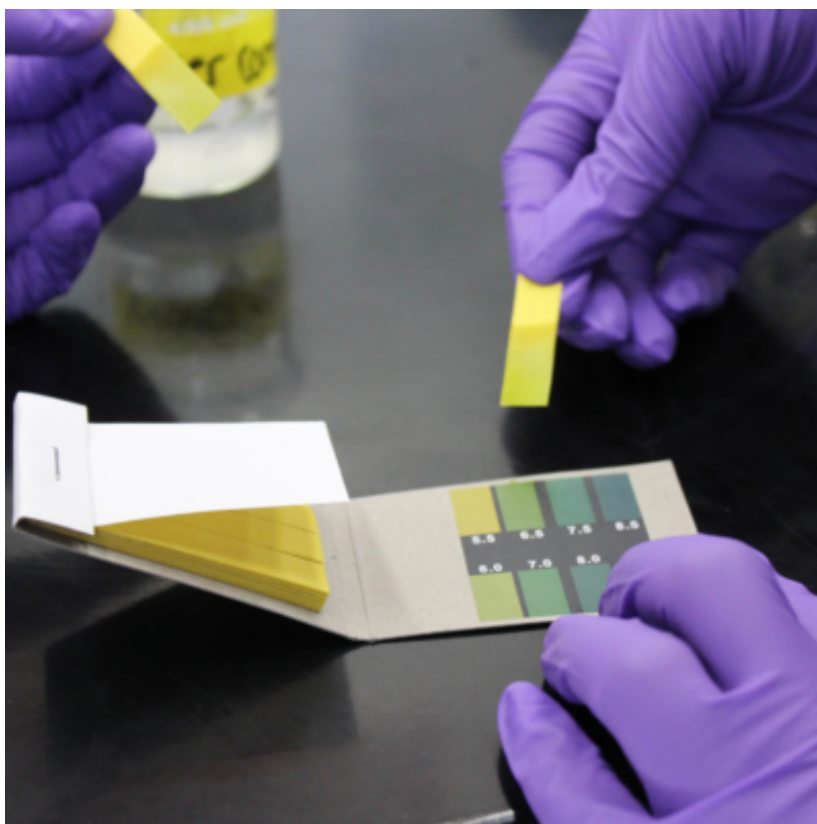
“Our students have unlimited potential in eastern North Carolina. Unlimited,” said Andrew Lakis, Executive Director of Teach For America-Eastern North Carolina. “But the unfortunate reality is they don’t have the access to opportunity that they should have.”



Students learn to experiment with oil-eating microbes at the ENC STEM summer program.
Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC



“We’re looking at how scientists work together to solve environmental problems in their community,” said instructor Caroline Harris. Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC



Students test pH using testing strips. Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC

ENC STEM was founded by Teach For America-Eastern North Carolina alumni. Elaina Sabatine, co-director of ENC STEM, said the organization's leadership team is comprised of math and science teachers who recognized the importance of quality STEM education.

"For us, access to STEM is an issue of social justice," Sabatine said. "We talk to our kids about the importance of STEM education . . . but the opportunities that they have are contingent upon their proximity to resources, and that's kind of the challenge in eastern NC."



High schoolers conduct an experiment in the NC School of Science and Math residential program held by ENC STEM. Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC



A student prepares her experiment in week 3 of the ENC STEM program. Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC

That's why students' course loads included a leadership course not directly related to STEM titled, "Social Justice and Advocacy."

"Ultimately, our instructors have the flexibility to create the course that they want," Sabatine said. "Those instructors wanted students to have the opportunity to work on a topic that was relevant and interesting to them."

Away from the test tubes and math problems, students formed groups to create a final narrative project on a topic from their leadership class. Topics included mass incarceration, autism discrimination, police brutality, the wage gap, and teen suicide.



Groups of students work on their social advocacy project presentations as part of their ENC STEM leadership course.
Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC

“We chose teen suicide because I feel like it really connects to my life, being that a person in my family has done that while they were a teen. It happens so frequently,” said rising senior Rashera Galloway. “The largest rate increase for teen suicide is among black adolescents. I’m a black female. I know how it feels...We are in school. We have sports. I live in a low income community, so I [have] to help supply for my family, too. I feel the stress.”

“Sometimes people don’t know what to do. They don’t know who to call. I feel like it just needs to get noticed. It goes under-acknowledged,” said Galloway.

Alyssa Garner, Galloway’s project partner, said that learning more about teen suicide can save teens who have a whole life ahead of them.

“It could be one of our friends that could commit suicide tonight, and some of us might not know because we didn’t recognize the signs that they were depressed and going through things,” said Garner. “I feel like if everyone gets more involved in learning about teen suicide and the major cause of it, we can check on our friends and family more.”



Alyssa Garner (left) and Rashera Galloway (right) work on their presentation focused on teen suicide as part of their Social Advocacy leadership course for ENC STEM. Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC

Across the table, Dayzsha Joyner and Aniziah Glenn compiled presentations on the gender wage gap.

“A lot of people know about the gender wage gap, but not a lot of people speak on the gender wage gap. It’s very transparent that it’s happening, but not many people are leaning towards changing it,” said Joyner, a rising senior who said she had experienced a difference in pay at her place of employment. “It’s not like women don’t want to work...If a woman is there to work and she’s doing the same thing as a man, then there’s no way that a man should get more money than she [does].”

Joyner and Glenn said the leadership course served as an outlet for an issue they could relate to and were passionate about. However, their primary interests remained in STEM. Joyner hopes to be a neurosurgeon and study biochemistry in college, while Glenn said her favorite subject has always been math.

“In math right now, we are learning matrices, and I haven’t really been exposed to that until I started this [program],” Glenn said. “I see that it also ties with biology because we are learning about amino acids and how it relates to matrices.”



"It pushed me a lot," Anthony Shaw (left) said of the of the ENC STEM program. Yasmin Bendaas/EducationNC

For other students, ENC STEM simply helped them open up to others.

"I was building a character trait that I didn't really have: to start a conversation," said Anthony Shaw, a rising junior at KIPP Pride High School. "I feel like in college it will help me a lot. If I can go up to professors and introduce myself and get the type of help that I need, then I can push through."

Energizing NC

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2018 CMBCC 30 Under 30 Honorees

Charlotte Mecklenburg Black Chamber of Commerce put out the call for the area's brightest black professionals and entrepreneurs for our signature 30 Under 30 awards event. Our 2018 honorees are excelling professionally, innovating within their industry and have wide-ranging positive impact on their respective communities.

The 2018 class of honorees were recognized at the signature 30 Under 30 awards event on Thursday, June 7, 2018. [Click here](#) for event photos.

Congratulations to this year's CMBCC 30 Under 30 Honorees!

[Ashley Jackson](#)

Gift Box Shop, LLC



[Brandi Fox](#)

Pamper Us Mobile Massage Service & The Pamper Lounge



Caleb Theodros

Bank of America



Christina Pickett

GM Financial



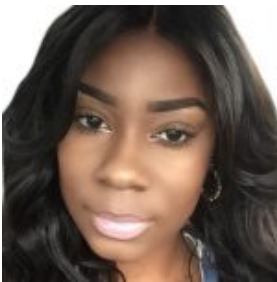
DeMario Caldwell

Duff Norton



Diamond Weems

Diamond's Beauty Bar & Iconic Lip Lab



Dianna Flood

TIAA-CREF



Erica Wilkerson

NASCAR



George Acheampong

Makes Cents 2 Me, Inc



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